No. 25.

ADDRESS

ON THE

SLAVE TRADE AND SLAVERY,

TO SOVEREIGNS, AND THOSE IN AUTHORITY IN THE NATIONS OF EUROPE, AND OTHER PARTS OF THE WORLD WHERE THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION IS PROFESSED.

FROM THE YEARLY MEETING OF FRIENDS IN LONDON, HELD IN 1849.

RICHMOND, IND.:

PUBLISHED BY THE CENTRAL BOOK AND TRACT COMMITTEE OF FRIENDS, AND TO BE HAD AT THEIR DEPOSITORY.

ADDRESS

To Sovereigns, and those in authority in the Nations of Europe, and in other parts of the World where the Christian Religion is professed.

From the Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends of Great Britain and Ireland, held in London, 1849.

It having pleased the Lord to bring our fathers to a sense of the cruelty and wickedness of the African Slave Trade, and of the injustice of holding their fellow-men in Slavery, they were strengthened to act upon the conviction wrought on their minds: they set at liberty those they held in bondage, and, in their faithfulness, they enjoyed the answer of a good conscience toward God. In that love which comes from Him, their hearts were enlarged in love to their neighbor, and they could not rest without endeavoring to bring others to that sense of justice and mercy to which the Lord had brought them. From that time to the present day we have felt it to be laid upon us as a church to bear a testimony against the sin of Slavery.

We have believed it to be our Christian duty to represent the wrongs inflicted upon the people of Africa, and repeatedly to plead the cause of the Slave in addresses to our own government. We rejoice and are thankful at the progress which has been made in this country and in other nations in this cause of righteousness. Hundreds of thousands of Slaves have been restored to liberty, and many of the nations of the civilized world are now, to a large extent, delivered from the guilt of the African Slave Trade—a trade which the Congress of Vienna, in 1815, pronounced to be "a scourge which desolates Africa, degrades Europe, and afflicts humanity," and for the suppression of which laws

have been enacted. But our hearts are sorrowful in the consideration that this traffic is still carried on to a large extent, and that a vast amount of the population of the western world is still subject to the cruelty and the wrong of Slavery. We desire to cherish this sympathy, and that we may behold the increase of it among all men everywhere.

One God is the Creator of us all; his eyes are in every place beholding the evil and the good. He will bring every work to judgment, and every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil. The families of the earth are all of one blood; all partakers in the same corrupt nature consequent upon the fall of man; all are alike subject to infirmity, disease and death, and all amenable to the same judgment after death. In the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ there is no respect for persons: He tasted death for every man: all distinctions of country, tongue and color are merged in the immensity of that love in which the Father has sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. Wherever the religion of the Gospel of Christ obtains its proper place within us, it softens our hearts; it brings man into fellow-feeling with his fellow-man; it brings him to regard every man as a brother, and to look upon the nations of the earth as all of one family. Among the millions of mankind, there is not one beneath the notice of our Father who is in heaven. If we be partakers of his love, it leads us into pity for the forlorn, the helpless and the oppressed; and it constrains us to do what we can to mitigate the pain and to assuage the sorrows of those who are in suffering; to befriend the friendless, and to labor for the improvement of the condition of the most degraded of our race.

We are now assembled in our Yearly Meeting for the promotion of charity and godliness among ourselves, and, according to our measure, for the spreading of truth and righteousness upon the earth. The condition of the natives

of Africa as affected by the continuation of the Slave Trade, and that of the Slaves in North and South America, and on the islands adjacent to that continent, have again awakened our sympathy. We submit to the consideration of all those in authority in the nations which take upon them the name of Christ the utter incompatibility of Slavery with the divine law. "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them;" these were the precepts of our Lord. He spoke as never man spoke, and of his words he declared, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away;" they are the law of God's righteousness to all generations. We submit whether, without breaking this law, it be possible for man to hold or claim a right to property in the person of his fellow-man: whether, admitting the supreme authority of this law, man can buy or sell his brother: whether he can withhold from those who labor for him that which is just and equal: whether the forced and uncompensated labor of the negro Slave be not the breaking of this law: in short, whether any man, or any of the nations of men, can, in any one of these things, violate the law of the Lord and be guiltless.

For the space of three hundred years, the trade in Slaves has been carried on from Africa to the opposite shores of the Atlantic; and this traffic in the persons of men is still prosecuted with unrelenting and unmitigated cruelty; year by year countless multitudes are torn from all that they hold dear in life, to pass their days in toil and misery. Men are still to be found so hardened in heart, so bent upon the gain of oppression, and so devoid of all that we deem the common feelings of humanity, as to spend their time and talents in pursuit of this criminal commerce. We forbear to enter in detail upon the large variety of human suffering, inseparable from this complicated iniquity. But we trust

we do not take too much upon ourselves in asking those whom we now address to open their ears to the groaning of the oppressed, and to give themselves to sympathy with their sufferings; to think upon the war, the rapine, and bloodshed attendant upon the capture of Slaves in the interior of Africa—upon what they are made to endure in their transit to the coast, and in their passage across the ocean; and not to shrink from making themselves acquainted with the horrors and loathsomeness of the Slave-ship; to follow the poor, helpless, unoffending negro, if he survive the suffering of the voyage, and to think upon his condition when landed upon a foreign shore, and entered upon a life of hard and hopeless servitude—it may be—to be worked to death in his early manhood, or to live to behold his children subjected to the same degradation and oppression as himself.

Blessed is the man that considereth the poor. The blessing of the Lord resteth upon him who, knowing the evil which attends his neighbor's lot in life, is stretching forth his hand for the relief of his poverty and distress, and his blessing is upon those who, like the Patriarch of old, are inquiring into the sorrows and hardship of the poor, the fatherless, and those that have none to help them. "The cause which I knew not, I searched out."

Our sympathies are awakened, not for the native African alone, and the victims of the African Slave Trade, but we feel for those who are living and laboring in a state of Slavery, who were born in Slavery, and possibly may die subject to its privation and its hardship. In those countries in which this system is upheld by law, man is degraded to the condition of a beast of burden, and regarded as an article of merchandise. The Slave has nothing in life that he can call his own; his physical powers, the limbs of his body, belong to another; it can scarcely be said that the faculties of his mind are his own. All that distinguishes

him as a rational creature is, by the law of the State, treated as the property of another. He may be a man fearing God, and desiring to approve himself a disciple of Christ—we believe that there are such. Whatever the consistency of his character as a Christian, and however advanced in the cultivation of his mind, all avails him nothing, he is still a Slave, and the law allows him nothing to look to in life but hopeless, helpless, friendless Slavery. Endowed by his Maker with capacity for enjoyment, like other men, he has his social affections; he may be honorably married, and in married life surrounded by offspring dear to him as his own flesh; but he knows not the day nor the hour in which he may be torn from his wife, or in which his children, at their tender age, may be snatched away, sold to the man-trader, and carried into far distant captivity. So long as Slavery is upheld by law, we can have no security for the extinction of a trade in Slaves. Such are the contingencies of the system, under every modification of which it is capable, that until Slavery be abolished, men, women and children will, we fear, be imported from Africa, and be bought and sold like the cattle of the field, and the barbarities of the Slave-market will continue to pollute the towns and villages of those islands in the West Indies in which Slavery exists, and in the Slave-holding countries of America.

The subject is so vast, and of such manifold atrocity, we think, that even the history of the whole world does not furnish a parallel to its crime. We deem it scarcely possible for a man of the most comprehensive mind fully to possess himself of the extent of the evil. The Lord alone doth know: none but the Infinite mind can comprehend the individual and the aggregate sufferings of those subjected to these enormities. God alone can reach the heart, and awaken the conscience. It is our strong desire—we speak with reverence and fear—it is our prayer, that He may bring every one to a sense of his own share in the

guilt, and that, ceasing from his iniquity, the condemnation resting upon the man-stealer, and upon those who trade in the persons of men, may no longer attach itself to any one bearing the name of Christian; and that the Slave-holder, whether he be more or less involved in the sin of oppression, may be brought to act in obedience to the law of impartial and uncompromising equity, and without hesitation, and without delay, restore to immediate and unconditional freedom every Slave he holds in bondage.

The Gospel of Christ is precious to us. Through the mercy of God to our souls we trust we are prepared, in some degree, to appreciate the means which, in his wisdom and love, He has provided for the redemption of the world, and the reconciling of man to Himself. In the word of ancient prophecy, Christ was promised that in Him all the families of the earth might be blessed. We cannot but entertain the opinion that the enlightenment of multitudes of the inhabitants of Africa, and their participation in the privileges and the consolation of the Christian Religion, have been much retarded by the evil deeds of many who have gone among them; and especially that the cruelty and wickedness of the Slave Trade have done much to keep them in ignorance of Him who died for them. In that love which extends over sea and land, and seeks the happiness of the whole human race, we make our appeal to those with whom it lies, and respectfully press upon them to take their part, in accordance with the peaceable religion of Christ, in removing every impediment out of the way, that, through the grace of God, the African, of every tribe and every tongue, may be brought to the knowledge of the Truth as it is in Jesus.

May it please the Lord Almighty to bless those who reign, and those who are in authority, in every nation in which Christianity is acknowledged. May his wisdom preside in all their councils, and the law of his righteousness

be the rule of their actions. May the Prince of Peace, Christ Jesus our Saviour, be honored wherever his name is known. May his holy religion obtain its rightful influence in the earth, and the people become prepared to offer praise to God in the language uttered by the Heavenly Host—"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

Signed in and on behalf of the Meeting,

GEORGE STACEY,

Clerk to the Meeting this year.